

Message Text

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10

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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R 030357Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6217

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

USSAG NAKHON PHANOM

13TH ADVON UDORN

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS : MARR, TH

SUBJECT : U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND

REFERENCE: A. BANGKOK 13699

B. FBIS BANGKOK D 010929Z SEPT

C. FBIS BANGKOK D 030234Z SEPT

C. FBIS BANGKOK D 030232Z SEPT

1. FOLLOWING EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS THAT U.S. MISSION REPRESENTATIVES HAVE HAD AT VARIOUS LEVELS WITH THE RTG AND THE PRESS, THE RTG AND THE USG NOW SEEM TO BE IN CLOSE ACCORD ON THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND. DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER CHARTCHAI CHUNHAWAN, WHOSE MINISTRY HAD BEEN THE LEADING RTG ELEMENT IN URGING US TROOP REDUCTIONS WAS QUOTED AS FOLLOWS: QTE "AMERICAN PRESENCE IS NEEDED UNTIL THE NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES INVADING LAOS, CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM RETURN HOME."

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END QTE (REF B)

CHATCHAI ALSO CITED 32,000 AT THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO REMAIN IN THAILAND AFTER THE PRESENT WITHDRAWAL PROGRAM.

2. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER THE NATION, WHICH HAS BEEN HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE US PRESENCE, STATED IN ITS SEPTEMBER 2 WEEKLY REVIEW: QTE "THERE IS COMPLETE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE THAI GOVERNMENT AND THE AMERICAN EMBASSY THAT AN EFFECTIVE AIR-STRIKE FORCE MUST BE KEPT IN THAILAND SO THAT IT CAN GO INTO ACTION IN CASE OF ANY MAJOR TRUCE VIOLATION IN INDOCHINA BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE...THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE NORTH VIETNAM STICK TO THE AGREEMENT REACHED IN JANUARY IN PARIS, BOTH COUNTRIES BELIEVE, IS TO KEEP THE AMERICAN AIR POWER IN THAILAND BIG ENOUGH TO MAKE NORTH VIETNAM TOE THE LINE." END QTE (REF C)

3. A SEPTEMBER 3 BANGKOK POST EDITORIAL REFLECTED SIMILAR VIEWS. QTE "THAILAND, WITHOUT A FRIENDLY BIG POWER TO PROVIDE A BALANCE, WILL FIND IT MORE DIFFICULT TO CARRY OUT AN INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE THE COMMUNISTS FROM COMMUNIST CHINA TO NEIGHBORING STATES WANT TO EXTEND AND PROTECT THEIR INTERESTS...OUR GOVERNMENT WOULD LIKE A SITUATION WHERE THERE ARE NO FOREIGN TROOPS IN THAILAND BUT THE CONDITIONS SURROUNDING THE COUNTRY ARE SUCH THAT IF THE US FORCES LEAVE IMMEDIATELY A VACUUM IS LEFT -- AND IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS, POWER HATES A VACUUM AND THERE WOULD BE RUSH TO FILL IT. OUR PRIME MINISTER IS WELL AWARE OF THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF 60,000 NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES IN LAOS AND STILL HUGE NUMBERS IN CAMBODIA. UNLESS HANOI WITHDRAWS THESE FORCES FROM THE TWO NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBORS OUR OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY FEEL IT IS FOOLISH TO LET THE AMERICAN FORCES ALL PACK UP AND FLY AWAY." END QTE (REF D)

4. COMMENT: THE RTG AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS THUS SEEM TO SHARE THE VIEW THAT A SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITY OF US MILITARY MUST REMAIN IN THAILAND AS A DETERRENCE TO NORTH VIETNAMESE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AGGRESSION ELSEWHERE IN SOUTH EAST ASIA. CHATCHAI'S USE OF THE FIGURE 32,000, APPROXIMATELY THE NUMBER IN THAILAND BEFORE THE APRIL 1972 NVA OFFENSIVE, MAY ALSO BE INDICATIVE OF THE QUANTITY THE RTG BELIEVES IT CAN LIVE WITH UNTIL NORTH VIETNAMESE INTENTIONS BECOME CLEAR.
UNGER

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